

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 – 18. (CANCELLED)

19. (ORIGINAL) An automatic sales machine for selling a product, the product identity being concealed at the time of offer, the sales machine comprising:

- a processor;
- a memory connected to said processor storing a program to control the operation of said processor;
- the processor operative with the program in the memory to:
 - maintain a database of product data, including normal price data and minimum acceptable price data for each of a plurality of products;
 - identify a monetary value available for purchasing a product;
 - select a product from among the plurality of products based on the monetary value and the minimum acceptable price data;
 - output via an output device an offer of the product to a consumer;
 - determine whether the consumer accepts the offer; and
 - dispense the product if the consumer accepts the product, thereby revealing the identity of the product to the consumer.

20 – 22. (CANCELLED)

23. (ORIGINAL) The automatic sales machine of claim 19, wherein the processor is further operative with the program in the memory to select a combination of products.

24 – 25. (CANCELLED)

26. (ORIGINAL) The automatic sales machine of claim 19, wherein the processor is further operative with the program in the memory to determine whether the monetary value is at least as great as the lowest minimum acceptable price, and to offer the product performed only upon determining that the monetary value is at least as great as the lowest minimum acceptable price.

27. (CANCELLED)

28. (ORIGINAL) The automatic sales machine of claim 19, wherein the database further includes expiration data for each of the plurality of products and wherein the processor is further operative with the program in the memory to select the product based on the expiration data.

29. (ORIGINAL) The automatic sales machine of claim 19, wherein the database further includes profitability data for each of the plurality of products and wherein the processor is further operative with the program in the memory to select the product based on the profitability data.

30 – 48. (CANCELLED)

49. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method for selling a product from a vending machine, the product identity being concealed at the time of offer, the processing instructions for directing a computer to perform the steps of:

- maintaining a database of product data, including normal price data and minimum acceptable price data for each of a plurality of products;
- identifying a monetary value available for purchasing a product;
- selecting a product from among the plurality of products based on the monetary value and the minimum acceptable price data;
- outputting via an output device an offer of the product to a consumer;
- determining whether the consumer accepts the product; and
- dispensing the product if the consumer accepts the product, thereby revealing the identity of the product to the consumer.

50 - 52. (CANCELLED)

53. (NEW) An automatic sales machine for selling a product, the product identity being concealed at the time of offer, the sales machine comprising:

a processor;

an output device in communication with the processor;

a dispensing device in communication with the processor;

a memory in communication with the processor, the memory storing a program to control the operation of said processor,

the processor operative with the program in the memory to:

determine a respective profit margin for each of a plurality of products;

output via the output device an offer of a combination of products to a consumer;

determine whether the consumer accepts the offer;

select, based on the respective profit margin for each of the plurality of products, a first product from among the plurality of products; and

transmit a signal to dispense the first product and a second product if the consumer accepts the offer.

54. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53,

the processor being further operative with the program in the memory to determine a respective minimum acceptable price for each of the plurality of products.

55. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53,

the processor being operative with the program in the memory to select the first product from among the plurality of products after determining whether the consumer accepts the offer.

56. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53, the processor being operative with the program in the memory to select the first product from among the plurality of products before determining whether the consumer accepts the offer.

57. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53, in which the selected first product has the lowest profit margin among the plurality of products.

58. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53, in which the selected first product has the highest profit margin among the plurality of products.

59. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53, in which the offer does not disclose an identity of any of the combination of products.

60. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53, in which the offer does not disclose a trademark of any of the combination of products.

61. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53, the processor further operative with the program in the memory to:
determine respective expiration data for each of the plurality of products; and
in which the processor is operative with the program in the memory to select, based on the respective profit margin and the respective expiration data for each of the plurality of products, the first product from among the plurality of products.

62. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53,
the processor further operative with the program in the memory to:
determine respective demand data for each of the plurality of
products; and

in which the processor is operative with the program in the memory to
select, based on the respective profit margin and the respective demand data for
each of the plurality of products, the first product from among the plurality of
products.

63. (NEW) The automatic sales machine of claim 53,
the processor further operative with the program in the memory to:
automatically determine revenue data associated with the plurality of
products; and

in which the processor is operative with the program in the memory to
select, based on the respective profit margin for each of the plurality of products
and the revenue data, the first product from among the plurality of products.